



U.S. Department of Transportation
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.
www.dot.gov/briefing.htm

News

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, July 31, 2000

RSPA: 18-00
Contact: Patricia Klinger
Telephone: 202-366-4831

U.S. Department of Transportation Invites Public To Meeting on Testing Results of Olympic Pipeline

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Office of Pipeline Safety (OPS) today invited the public to a meeting in Bellingham, Wash., on Aug. 8, 2000, to discuss the results of an internal pipeline inspection test conducted by the Olympic Pipe Line Company.

State and local officials will also be present at the meeting to update the progress in restoring Whatcom Creek and to discuss the City of Bellingham's agreement with the Olympic Pipe Line Company.

"We look forward to working with the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission to provide the communities here in Washington with information about the safety measures the department has ordered Olympic Pipe Line Company to undertake. The Department is taking a comprehensive approach in addressing any outstanding safety issues with regard to this particular pipeline," said Kelley S. Coyner, Administrator of the Research and Special Programs Administration, the U.S. Department of Transportation agency that has oversight over the Office of Pipeline Safety.

The meeting will be hosted by the City of Bellingham, the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC) and the Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE) and will be held at the Squalicum High School, 3773 E. McLeow Road, in Bellingham. At 5 p.m., officials from the WUTC, Washington DOE, Safe Bellingham, OPS and BP Amoco will

July 31, 2000
RSPA 18-00

have information booths open to the public. Representatives from OPS will be available to answer questions from the public about the pipeline safety program. The meeting will officially begin at 7 p.m.

This meeting will give the public an opportunity to learn more about the results of the internal inspection tests taking place on the 16-inch pipeline from Ferndale to Allen, Wash. Additionally, the federal Office of Pipeline Safety will inform the community of mandated safety improvements that have been completed to date. The meeting will also focus on the remaining issues to be addressed before the Olympic Pipe Line Company can resume full operating pressure on the 75-mile segment of pipeline that has been closed since June 15, 1999.

During the past year, OPS ordered the pipeline operated by Olympic to be shut down. OPS also ordered repairs and testing on the pipeline. The pipeline has not re-opened for service since the failure. To date, Olympic has not completed all of the required testing and repairs. Additionally, OPS announced on June 2, that it was seeking the largest civil penalty ever proposed against a pipeline operator in the history of the federal pipeline safety program in excess of \$3 million.

July 31, 2000
RSPA 18-00

OPS stationed a full-time inspector in Washington and conducted a joint inspection with the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission of all pipelines in the state of Washington. In addition, OPS participated in a pipeline safety task force convened by Washington Governor Gary Locke.

Under the leadership of the Washington State congressional delegation the U.S. Congress is currently considering a number of legislative proposals to improve the safety of oil and gas pipelines across the nation. Earlier this year Vice President Gore, joined by U.S. Transportation Secretary Rodney E. Slater, proposed the Pipeline Safety and Community Protection Act of 2000, which would strengthen citizens' right to know about pipelines in their communities.

###